

VIRGINIA:

BEFORE THE BOARD OF MEDICINE

IN RE: RALPH THOMAS REACH, M.D.
License No.: 0101-041174

ORDER

In accordance with Sections 54.1-2919 and 9-6.14:11 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended ("Code"), an informal conference was held with Ralph Thomas Reach, M.D., on April 15, 1999, in Roanoke, Virginia. Members of the Virginia Board of Medicine ("Board") serving on the Informal Conference Committee ("Committee") were Harry C. Beaver, M.D., Chairman; Jeffrey R. Vaughn, M.D.; and Richard M. Newton, M.D. Dr. Reach appeared personally and was represented by legal counsel, Joseph Graham Painter, Jr., Esquire. The purpose of the informal conference was to inquire into allegations that Dr. Reach may have violated certain laws governing the practice of medicine in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as set forth in a Notice of Informal Conference dated March 11, 1999.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Now, having properly considered the information and statements presented, the Committee makes the following Findings of Fact:

1. On or about August 11, 1997, Dr. Reach was admitted to Columbia Montgomery Regional Hospital, Blacksburg, Virginia ("CMRH"), in initial cardiopulmonary arrest. A urine drug screen revealed a positive screen for cocaine, codeine by TLC, morphine by TLC, opiates as class, and a presumptive positive screen for propoxyphene.
2. By his admission, Dr. Reach relapsed on alcohol in February 1997.
3. On a recurrent basis between November 17, 1997 and March 31, 1998, Dr. Reach was treated by Richard R. Irons, M.D., Menninger Clinic, Topeka, Kansas. By letter to the Board dated July 28, 1998, Dr. Irons reported that upon discharge, Dr. Reach was diagnosed with bipolar II disease, narcissistic personality with borderline features, and dual diagnosed with substance abuse disorder. Further, Dr. Irons stated that Dr. Reach was currently unable to perform the material duties of his regular occupation in emergency medicine, and appeared unable to practice any medicine in a formal clinical setting for the foreseeable future.
4. Dr. Reach last practiced medicine on or about August 11, 1997, in the Emergency Room at CMRH, under a

contract with Southeastern Emergency Physicians of Memphis, Inc. ("SEPM"). Because of health problems, Dr. Reach was not scheduled to work at CMRH after August 1997, and his contract with SEPM was not renewed.

5. By letter to the Board dated December 2, 1998, Neil P. Dubner, M.D., stated that at this point Dr. Reach is not capable of practicing medicine.

6. Dr. Reach stated that his sobriety date is August 11, 1997. As part of his recovery program, Dr. Reach stated that he currently attends AA or NA meetings three (3) times per week and Caduceus meetings approximately once per week. Further, Dr. Reach stated that he has at least monthly contact with his therapist and with his treating psychiatrist.

7. Dr. Reach is scheduled to be reevaluated at the Menninger Clinic in April 2000.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Committee concludes that Dr. Reach is in violation of Section 54.1-2915.A(2) and (3), as further defined in Section 54.1-2914.A(11) of the Code.

ORDER

WHEREFORE, based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, it is hereby ORDERED that the license of Ralph Thomas Reach, M.D., to practice medicine in the Commonwealth of Virginia, be, and hereby is, placed on INDEFINITE PROBATION upon the following terms and conditions:

1. Within thirty (30) days of entry of this Order, Dr. Reach shall enter into the Health Practitioners' Intervention Program ("HPIP"), pursuant to Chapter 25.1 of Title 54.1 of the Code, and 18 VAC 76-10-10 et seq. of the Regulations Governing the Health Practitioners' Intervention Program, and shall provide proof of entry into HPIP to the Executive Director of the Board. Dr. Reach's agreement with HPIP shall include the following terms and conditions:

a. random drug screens at a frequency of not less than monthly for the first six (6) months of the agreement, and subsequently at the direction of HPIP;

b. regular attendance at AA and/or NA meetings at a frequency of not less than three (3) times per week and at Caduceus at a frequency of not less than once per week for the first six (6) months of the agreement, and subsequently at the direction of HPIP; and

c. continuation in therapy with his treating counselor and psychiatrist, with quarterly reports from such treating practitioners to be made to HPIP on a calendar quarterly basis.

2. Dr. Reach shall practice medicine only in a supervised practice setting approved by the Executive Director of the Board. Dr. Reach shall not engage in the practice of medicine until the setting is approved by the Executive Director of the Board and Dr. Reach receives authorization to practice. Any request from Dr. Reach for approval of practice setting must be accompanied by statements from Richard R. Irons, M.D., and Neil P. Dubner, M.D., regarding Dr. Reach's competency to practice in such setting.

3. Within one (1) year of entry of this Order, Dr. Reach shall successfully complete fifty (50) hours of Continuing Medical Education, of which twenty-five (25) hours shall be Category I, AMA approved.

4. Dr. Reach shall sign an authorization providing for unrestricted communication between and among the Board, HPIP, and any and all former and current treating practitioners, which shall include authorization of the release of Dr. Reach's April 2000 reevaluation by the Menninger Clinic.

5. Dr. Reach shall cooperate with the Board and the Department of Health Professions in its investigation to verify compliance with this Order.

6. Dr. Reach shall provide a copy of this Order to each of his treating practitioners.

7. In approximately one (1) year, and after his reevaluation report from the Menninger Clinic is provided to the Board, Dr. Reach shall be noticed to appear before an informal conference committee of the Board. Said committee shall provide the continuing monitoring of Dr. Reach's Order, determine the frequency of further appearance by Dr. Reach before it, and shall serve as the instrument of the Board responsible for reviewing and approving all information relative to the terms and conditions of this Order, except as noted above. Prior to Dr. Reach's appearance before the informal conference committee, a report of probation shall be prepared by an inspector with the Department of Health Professions, to include reports from Dr. Reach's treating practitioners, Dr. Reach's reevaluation report from the Menninger Clinic, and a report of Dr. Reach's compliance with his HPIP agreement.

8. Dr. Reach shall maintain a course of conduct in his practice of medicine commensurate with the requirements of Title 54.1, Chapter 29 of the Code and all laws of the Commonwealth.

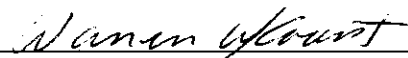
Violation of this Order constitutes grounds for the revocation of the license of Dr. Reach. In the event Dr. Reach violates the terms of this Order, an administrative proceeding will be convened to determine whether the license of Dr. Reach should be revoked.

Pursuant to Section 9-6.14:14 of the Code, the signed original of this Order shall remain in the custody of the Department of Health Professions as a public record, and shall be made available for public inspection and copying upon request.

Dr. Reach may, not later than 5:00 p.m., on May 22, 1999, notify Warren W. Koontz, M.D., Executive Director, Board of Medicine, 6606 West Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23230, in writing that he desires a hearing before the Board. Upon the filing with the Executive Director of a request for the hearing, this Order shall be vacated.

Therefore, this Order shall become final on May 22, 1999, unless a request for a hearing is received as described above.

FOR THE BOARD



Warren W. Koontz, M.D.
Executive Director
Virginia Board of Medicine

Entered: April 19, 1999

VAS/REACHORD.DOC